

Glossary of Terms

Bisexual

Bisexual people have a romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of the same and opposite sex – not necessarily at the same time, and not necessarily an equal amount of attraction for each gender.

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people on various grounds, including race, age, social status, marital status, health status, sex, sexual orientation and gender (including gender identity, expression and presentation).

Gender

Social and cultural expressions shown through behaviours, mannerisms, dress and activities. Masculinity and femininity are the most commonly known genders. Socially constructed characteristics may vary according to the times and society or group to which one belongs.

Gender affirming treatment

Can include counselling and psychosocial support, hormone replacement treatment, gender affirming surgery (also known as sex reassignment surgery) – to bring one's physical characteristics in line with one's gender identity.

Gender identity

Refers to a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification as a man, woman, or sometimes in between – which may or may not correspond to the person's body or sex assigned at birth. An internalised representation of gender roles and awareness from infancy, which is reinforced during adolescence.

Gender non-conforming

A person who does not conform to the binary male-female categories that society prescribes. Transgender people, for example, are gender non-conforming – but others who are not transgender might also fall into this category.

Heterosexual

A person attracted to people of the opposite gender, romantically and/or sexually, where the gender of the attracted person is the key to the attraction.

Homosexual

A person attracted to people of the same gender, romantically and/or sexually, where the gender of the attracted person is the key to the attraction.

Homophobia

Irrational fear of homosexual feelings, thoughts, behaviours, or people, and an undervaluing of homosexual identities – resulting in prejudice, discrimination and bias against homosexual individuals.

Human rights

Human rights are universal, fundamental, inalienable rights, which all human being are entitled to regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social class, national origin, occupation, talent, religion, or any other personal factor. All individuals are entitled to human rights – simply because they are human.

Inalienable rights

Rights that cannot be forfeited (given up), transferred or lost.

International human rights instruments

International human rights instruments are treaties and other international documents relevant to international human rights law and the protection of human rights in general.

Intersex

Being born with ambiguous sex characteristics (chromosomes, genitals and/or reproductive organs). Many variations exist; intersex is not one category, but includes many different ways someone might defy the medical definitions of “male” and “female”.

Lesbian

A sexual identity and orientation. A woman attracted to other women, romantically and/or sexually.

Men who have sex with men (MSM)

A sexual practice irrespective of sexual orientation or identity. An MSM can be a heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or transgender man. This term is technical and is not necessarily an identity.

Sex

The biological, hormonal, and chromosomal characteristics referred to as male and female. While medical and scientific advances indicate that the concept of sex incorporates a wider spectrum of characteristics beyond the traditional qualifications of “male” or “female”, individuals are still legally defined as either “male” or “female”.

Sexual orientation

Pattern of romantic and/or sexual attraction to a person of the opposite gender, same gender, or more than one gender.

Transman

A transgender man or female-to-male (FTM) is assigned female biological characteristics at birth, but his gender identity is male. Always use male pronouns when referring to a transman.

Transphobia

Irrational fear of transgender feelings, thoughts, behaviours or people, and an undervaluing of transgender identities – resulting in prejudice, discrimination and bias against transgender individuals. Where transphobia includes homophobia, we speak of homophobia and transphobia.

Transwoman

A transgender woman, or male-to-female (MTF) is assigned male biological characteristics at birth, but her gender identity is female. Always use female pronouns when referring to a transwoman.

Transgender

An umbrella term which is often used to describe people whose gender expression or gender identity differs from their biological sex or their gender assigned at birth. The umbrella term is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences – including transsexuals, FTM persons, MTF persons, transvestites, cross-dressers, two-spirits, gender-queers, and many more.

Transsexual

This refers to people who wish to undergo hormone replacement therapy and/or gender affirming surgery to align their bodies to their gender identity.

Women who have sex with women (WSW)

A sexual practice irrespective of sexual orientation or identity. A WSW can be a heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or transgender woman. This term is technical and is not necessarily an identity.

Universality of rights

Human rights apply to all persons throughout the world and are not dependent on sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic.